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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a curriculum unit that combined an overnight camping experience with survival training. The program was implemented with fifth grade students, but is appropriate for students in grades 4-8. Pre-camp learning activities included integrating first aid techniques in science class, reading survival trade books in reading class, researching and writing outdoor survival skill information in writing class, and learning map and compass-reading skills in math and social studies classes. The camp-out was planned by students, and they were responsible for setting up camp, making the fire ring, scavenging for wood, and planning activities. During the afternoon and evening, students participated in nature hikes and scavenger hunts; supper was cooked by the students; and special programs were arranged such as star gazing, campfire songs, and games. In the morning, students broke camp, ate breakfast, and prepared for their morning workshops. Parent volunteers conducted workshops for small groups of students on map and compass reading, first aid, foraging for food, shelter building, plant identification, and other survival themes. This program was successful because students were encouraged to take an active role in their learning. Additionally, the camping experience tied together classroom learning activities. Includes resources needed for program implementation. (LP)

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KIDS, PARENTS, AND TEACHER GO CAMPING TOGETHER... NATURALLY!!!

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Project SEED

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KIDS, PARENTS, TEACHER AND CAMPING GO TOGETHER NATURALLY!!!

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Students take an active role in their learning when it is combined with an overnight camping experience to "test" what they have learned from an integrated survival unit.
The unit involves integrating first aid techniques in science class, reading survival trade books in reading class, researching and writing outdoor survival skill information in writing class, and learning map and compass reading skills in math and social studies classes.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants in the overnight experience include homeroom students, parent volunteer chaperones and workshop conductors, parents who volunteer to donate food, and the homeroom teacher. This project has been done with fifth graders but could be done with students in 4th-8th grades. Volunteers also assisted in teaching the students first aid skills such as rescue breathing using mannequins and providing tours of the fire and rescue vehicles.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the survival unit was to tie together the integrated unit in a unique and motivating way for students. The hands on nature of the camp out encourages all students to pitch in if the group is to survive the night together. All of the planned activities are informal and the students are not tested on the content of the camp out. Since the camp out is held at the beginning of the school year, it also enables the teacher to have positive interaction with many parents and students.

PROCEDURES

Prior to the start of school, letters of introduction are mailed home to each homeroom student and his/her parents. The teacher is introduced, the camp out is mentioned and parents are asked to consider volunteering to chaperone and/ or conduct workshops for the students during the camp out.

The integrated curriculum involved:
SCIENCE: Introduction to the respiratory and circulatory systems of the human body. Basic Aid Training (B.A.T.) begins.
READING: Students independently read trade books with a survival theme during silent reading time. During instructional reading time, the teacher reads aloud a class survival book and conducts lessons on the book. Students keep learning journals which focus on the survival themes.
WRITING: Students participate in an introductory study skills program so they can "survive" fifth grade. The students then conduct research to create survival ABC books and narrative stories which have a survival theme.
SOCIAL STUDIES/MATH: Students learn map and compass skills, explore topographic maps of the area, and learn about outdoor survival skills such as shelter building, foraging for food and how to be rescued if lost in the woods. Students plan menus, camping equipment lists and a flexible schedule of activities.

*The camp out does not have to be done in conjunction with the unit. It can be done independently. The unit components can also be altered to reflect other curriculum requirements.

The camp out is held from Friday after school until noon on Saturday on the fields behind the school. It is usually done the first weekend in October. Prepare students for the possibility of warm and cold weather. If the weather is inclement, a postponement may be necessary but it may also present the realities of camping if it is done even in inclement weather.
Two weeks before the camp out, there is an evening planning meeting with the students and parents to plan who will bring tents and other needed

equipment, finalize the chaperone and workshop volunteers and organize the food list. The next day, send home a list of items each student needs to bring and also list what parents have volunteered to bring.

On the Thursday before the camp out, parents may bring stuff sacks, food and equipment to leave in the classroom or students may bring items on the school bus Friday morning, it space permits. No electronic equipment (radios, game boys, etc.) is allowed.

After school Friday afternoon, the equipment is carried out to the fields. Students set up the tents, make the fire ring, scavenge for wood and set up camp. Adults supervise but the students do the work. There is access to the school for emergencies, bathroom use and the gym is available if the weather is uncooperative.

During the afternoon and evening, nature hikes are taken, scavenger hunts are done, supper is cooked (by the students), and special programs can be arranged such as star gazing, campfire songs and games, etc. Have fun and be creative with this part of the evening. Students have great ideas. The more they help plan, the more successful the event will be.

In the morning, students break camp, eat breakfast and prepare for their morning workshops. Parent volunteers take a small group of students for workshops on map and compass reading, first aid, foraging, shelter building, plant identification and other survival themes. This segment lasts for 1 1/2 to 2 hours. The groups can then be rotated or another activity can be done. We go on a pond study and use dip nets to capture animals to study. This is usually quite messy and is done last so students can be sent home afterward. No lunch is served.

Parents are responsible for picking up their children at the school on Saturday.

RESOURCES NEEDED:

*Teachers should have Basic Aid Training to teach the program. Training and materials are provided at minimal cost through the Red Cross.
*Project Learning Tree activities can be used. I am a trained facilitator and can put on workshops free of cost with the other members of my team. We ask for a group of at least 10 people and 6 hours of your time for fun activities and training in using a FREE newly-revised manual. If you are outside of Kennebec County, call the Project Learning Tree office at 289-2791, to schedule a workshop with facilitators in your area.
*Trade books with a survival theme.
*Community or parent volunteers to conduct workshops at the camp out or as guest speakers during class.
*Camping equipment- students bring in or a local Boy Scout group may have tents to loan.
*Food - donated by parents.
*Paper cups and napkins - obtain free from Shop 'n Save.
*Place to camp which has access to rest rooms and a phone for emergency use.

CONCLUSION

Children are motivated by having the responsibility of planning and implementing an over night camp out. Camping with students is a fun exciting way to get to know your students and their parents. Students learn a great deal about each others abilities and strengths. They learn that surviving the night is a team effort. Lines of communication are opened up between teachers, students and parents. It is an experience that you and your students will never forget!!!
If you have any further questions or need help planning specific activities, I would be happy to assist you. Good luck! Have fun! Be creative!!!